

Report of the Community and Economic Development Office

This past fiscal year 2009, even Colchester has not been immune to the national and global economic crises happening around us. Through the year as I spoke to our businesses, I learned the severe economic downturn has hit our manufacturing, retail, and hospitality businesses the hardest. Most well established businesses however are weathering this time by reducing hours, reducing costs, and minimizing layoffs. The good news is some of our businesses, particularly those in the technology fields are expanding and growing, adding employees and looking for additional space. The fact that Colchester's economy is so diversified is its strength. We still offer our Partnership Fund, a revolving loan fund for businesses in Colchester of up to \$50,000 and \$25,000 as a revolving line of credit, now administered through Community Capital of Vermont www.cvcapital.com. The State has launched a new website through the Secretary of State's Office that provides all the resources needed start or expand a business at www.startabusinessinvermont.net.

Mission Statement: To provide leadership to create community and economic development that is sustainable and competitive globally and to be proactive in maintaining and enhancing the economic viability of Colchester through education, partnerships, innovation and strategic action.

Besides keeping track of the health of our local businesses, this past year has been busy from organizing the Colchester Quadricentennial Event to tackling complex issues such as public transit and discussing local option taxes. I organized and oversaw the CCTA-Colchester Public Transit Working Group last summer and fall that studied the need for transit along the US 7 corridor and prepared a proposal and flyer that was distributed on Election Day last November. The proposed source of funding was adoption of the local rooms, meals, and alcohol tax. This also prompted discussions by the Colchester Community and Economic Development Advisory Council (CEDAC) and the Select Board as to the feasibility and sense of adopting this tax as well as the local sales tax and the issue of whether to join CCTA. Discussions of both topics are continuing and the Select Board plans to discuss it further in the coming fiscal year and reach out to the voters.

As Chair of our volunteer Colchester Quadricentennial Committee overseeing our planning efforts for the 400th Anniversary of Samuel D. Champlain's discovery of Lake Champlain, I'd like to thank Glen Cuttitta, Ginger Gellman, and the volunteers for all their hard work in contributing to an especially successful and festive celebration on July 4th. Bayside Park was packed with smiling faces and energetic families, and attendance at this year's celebration exceeded our expectations. We estimate that nearly 5,000 people came out for the day's festivities, from the Fourth of July parade down Main Street, to the Quadricentennial Celebration in Bayside Park, to the music and fireworks at water's edge in the evening. The Quadricentennial Celebration itself likely brought over 2,000 people to the Bay, and the Maritime Museum reports that the 1862 sailing canal schooner *Lois McClure* hosted over 1,000 visitors during her first visit to Malletts Bay.



Lois McClure's First Visit to Malletts Bay—Over 1,000 visitors came to see her.

CEDAC studied and provided input to the Select Board on public transit, and local option tax this year. They are embarking on a short, concise five year strategic economic development plan for Colchester that will articulate concrete tasks for the near future making it usable and accountable, based on existing regional data that we have. They are also exploring a web/video component to the Plan. I would like to thank them for their hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm this past year serving the Town and especially thank Nanci Glindmyer for her service as Chair for the past year. We would also like to say goodbye and thank you to Chris Kurek who has served for the last two years and was our founding Chair of CEDAC.

We have worked hard to bring the Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences to Colchester to fill the “Bombardier” building and have connected them with Severance Corners to offer housing for their students. Their first class starts August 2009. We have joined the new statewide organization the Vermont Biosciences Alliance and suggested and assisted them in planning their kick off event June 2009 at Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences with Governor Douglas in attendance. The networking with the Alliance is allowing us to support the sustainable economic opportunities that the biosciences business and research community holds for Colchester and the region. I am working to strengthen our relationships and interest in providing or facilitating the needed infrastructure for these economic opportunities to thrive in Colchester particularly at Exit 16. Along with the UVM Medical Research Facility, the Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies, and existing technology businesses at Exit 16, we are building on a synergy that is beginning to take place to move Colchester into the future of sustainable biotechnology research and business.

This winter we will be working on Community and Economic Development web pages for the Town website with the objective of making the pages informative and engaging while utilizing social media options to reach citizens and businesses to increase our competitiveness with surrounding areas. How can this office best serve you and/or your business? Anything you would like to learn more about? Feel free to give me a call 264-5508 or email me at: kmurray@colchestervt.gov with any comments or questions you may have.

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